

Remarks

Claims 1-4 are currently pending in the patent application. For the reasons and arguments set forth below, Applicant respectfully submits that the claimed invention is allowable over the cited references.

In the instant Office Action dated December 17, 2007, claims 1-4 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over Tsuji *et al.* (US Patent No. 6,005,294).

Applicant respectfully traverses the § 102(b) rejection of claims 1-4 because the cited portions of the Tsuji reference do not correspond to claimed invention which includes, for example, aspects directed to each exposure field having at least two control module fields provided in place of lattice fields within the exposure field. In this instance, the Office Action's assertion of correspondence appears to rely upon a mischaracterization of the Tsuji reference. For example, the Office Action asserts that regions 17b shown in Tsuji's Fig. 3 correspond to the claimed exposure fields. However, the regions 17b also include dicing regions 2, whereas Applicant's claimed exposure fields do not include the dicing paths, as is clear from Applicant's Specification. See, e.g., Applicant's paragraph 0006, which describes the distance extending between adjacent exposure fields being determined by the width of the dicing path in between them, meaning that the dicing path does not form part of the exposure fields. As such, the three alignment marks shown and described by Tsuji to be part of the dicing regions cannot be properly interpreted to reside within any exposure field. Without intending to alter the scope of the claims, and for the purpose of providing additional clarity so that prosecution may be expedited, Applicant has amended claim 1 to recite that the control module fields provided in the exposure fields do not reside in any of the dicing paths.

For the reasons set forth above, Applicant submits that Tsuji does not disclose two or more control module fields provided in each exposure field where such control module fields do not reside in the dicing paths. Applicant further submits that the embodiment of Tsuji cited in the Office Action suggests that including alignment marks within the device region is undesirable, and that the single alignment mark within the device region can be excluded for all but one column of device regions at one edge of the wafer. As such, Tsuji teaches away from Applicant's invention which places multiple control

module fields within the exposure field and outside the dicing paths, for example so that the dicing paths can be narrowed (*see, e.g.*, paragraph 0006). Applicant therefore submits that the teachings of Tsuji would not render as obvious Applicant's claimed invention.

Moreover, Applicant has found no disclosure in Tsuji of multiple control module fields provided in each exposure field in place of lattice fields. For example, in Applicant's Fig. 2, control module A1 is positioned where a lattice field 3 would have otherwise been positioned. Applicant's invention appreciates that the displacement of lattice fields by placing the control module fields within the exposure fields can be more than compensated by narrowing the dicing paths, which is made possible by removing the control module fields from the dicing paths.


Applicant's reading of the Tsuji reference reveals no disclosure of multiple control module fields provided in each exposure field, no disclosure of multiple control module fields provided in each exposure field in place of lattice fields, no disclosure of each of the control module fields residing outside of the dicing paths, and no teaching or appreciation for benefits such as narrowing the dicing paths due to removal of the control module fields from the dicing paths. For at least these reasons, Applicant submits that the § 102(b) rejection of claims 1-4 over Tsuji is improper, and requests that the rejection be reconsidered and withdrawn.

Applicant further submits that the art of record does not appear to teach or suggest the invention recited in claim 1 and also including the additional features recited in newly added claims 5-7, namely: the dicing paths are free of any control module fields; the dicing path widths are determined solely by equipment used to segregate the wafer; and that a third group of dicing paths is included that run parallel to a third direction intersecting both the first direction of the first group of dicing paths and the second direction of the second group of dicing paths.

In view of the remarks above, Applicant believes that each of the rejections has been overcome and the application is in condition for allowance. Should there be any remaining issues that could be readily addressed over the telephone, the Examiner is asked to contact the agent overseeing the application file, Peter Zawilski, of NXP Corporation at (408) 474-9063.

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